AIRBOY

In this issue

35¢ SUMMER ISSUE THE COMIC CRUSADER 6

CRUSADER COMMENTS

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS

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I would like to start this editorial by thanking the many artists, Pro and Amateur alike, who have made this issue what it is.

A special thanks goes to STEVE DITKO, who is presenting, in these pages, a 2-part Mr. A strip. This strip is taking the place of The Defender strip, for two issues.

About Mr. A. This strip is not the usual fast action kind, but rather - ONE TO MAKE YOU THINK! Whether or not you agree with the qhilosophy in the Mr. A strip is immaterial, what does matter is that you think about it. Mr. A is perhaps one of the most controversial strips today. It is something new in the idea of storytelling and above all else - It Does Have A Message!

Many talented fans have sent me contributions and I will be using them in the near future. Please keep in mind, when contributing to "The Comic Crusader", to look at your work objectively. Take the position of you being the editor. Would you ask someone to pay 35¢ to look at, or read your material. Sure Contribute! But remember what this fanzine stands for - To Present The Best Material Obtainable, Relating To The Comic Media! Hence this fanzine's motto - "The Fanzine With The Fan In Mind!"

I HOPE YOU ENJOY THE ISSUE.

Yours truly,
Martin L. Greim

"AND DID YOU NOT HEAR OF A HERO YOUNG ?"

AIRBOY ~ PART 3

Written by
TOM FAGAN
Art by:
Martin L. Greim

Airboy stories reflected the tempo of the war years. In the Feb., 1943, Vol. 1, No. 5 edition, it was "Bombs Over Boston," featuring a daring German submarine attack on the Atlantic Coastline. Though in actual historical fact, no German bombs rained down onto the shore of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, lurking Nazi submarines were a menace during the early war years.

Comics, according to early critics, were not educational. Yet the reader who bothered to look up Airboy's newest opponent's name found "Kultur" to mean three things:

(1) "Civilization, culture, and social organization.
(2) "The undemocratic and pompous aspects of the German Nazi regimes: an ironical usage.
(3) "In Nazi jargon, the racial and historic superiorities of Germany and the Germans."

This latter definition was soon to be disproved by Airboy and Birdie. Even as the story opened Youth Kultur had proven his aerial skill by shooting down and killing a fellow airman in a contest staged by the Germans.

"Am I Not The Greatest Air Fighter In All of Germany??" says the victor. "To Be Sure," answers Herr Goerink, (a high Nazi air official) "You Are The Nazi Super Boy! YOUTH KULTURE--You Are Der Greatest Ace In The Vorld Today!!"

Kultur is to go to America on a sabotage mission for the Nazis but his real reason in wanting the assignment is, "There Iss One In America Who Must Be Beaten By Me--My Guns Vill End AIRBOY'S Mastery!"

An arrogant youth, Kulture wears a flamboyant costume of black and emerald, complete with cape and an encircled swastica chest emblem. To be sure the reader will not possibly mistake Kultur for anything by a German, the stereotyped monocle is part of the wearing apparell.

Kultur's plane is a laughable-looking but deadly craft. At first glance it resembles nothing more than a knockwurst sausage with short, stubby wings. Mainly it is green in color except for two painted bands of red, setting off the swastica insignia on each wing.

"A Nazi Plane In American Skies, Birdie!!! It's Up To Us To Make This Tomato Sorry He Came!!!" is Airboy's reaction upon seeing the clownish craft. A confident statement, but easier said than done as Airboy was to discover.

For Kultur's plane was a dual-craft. Motors were at both ends of the uniform fuselage. At a touch a rudder could fan out and become a propeller, while at the opposite end the propeller stopped and became a rudder. Coupled with this, guns and pilot's seat pivoted to all positions, as the plane went backward or forward according to Kultur's whim.

Vowed Airboy, "We'll Lick Him Even If He Flies Ninety Ways!" And when Kultur attempted "Der Nazi Suicide Crash" by flying head on at his opponent, Airboy pulled Birdie sharply up and the bird plane captured the Nazi craft in mid-flight, holding it in a vice-like grip.

Out to sea flies Birdie still holding onto the other plane "like a vulture." Over dark waters the craft is released to fall into the sea, which is to become a watery grave for Kultur. "Boy! I Wish Hitler Could See You Now!" is Airboy's rather un-Christian remark as the enemy plane sinks beneath the waters. Reaction in Berlin as Nazi officials hear of Youth Kultur's defeat?

"Dot AIRBOY Again!! Und He Iss Only ONE Of Dem Americans!! Imagine If Dere Are Odders As Daring!"

Where upons follows the story's conclusion as Air Fighters Comics in an editorial end proclaimed patriotically:

"YES!! THERE ARE OTHER AMERICANS LIKE AIRBOY!!--YOU NAZIS WILL SEE THEM--AND HOW!!"

Vol. 1, No. 8, May 1943, Airboy was again pitted against Japanese foes. The story proved:

"Nothing From Tokio Can Fool Airboy!!! And the skies of the World Won't Protect A Jap Spider Who Kills Airboy's Friend!!!...but Yankee Blood Runs Red In The Pacific Before Airboy Accepts Hara-Kiri As A Coward's Farewell." (Tony DiPreta was the artist on this story.)

AIRBOY

DiPreta's artwork was again evident in the tale unfolded in Vol. 1, No. 9, June-1943 saga, which let all of America know, "The Odds Are Against Hitler's Gang!! And AIRBOY is one of the reasons why!!!"

"...It's No Wonder That Axis Robots Become Clay Pigeons Before AIRBOY'S Guns...And By His Air Supremacy He Is Only One Hero Who Is Clutching Back To America What Is Rightfully Ours!!! AND NOW!"

The story modestly admitted Airboy was a "Typical American Lad." Even England breathed easier because of the "typical" boy from across the pond. Relief for the "mother country" came in the July, 1943, issue of Vol. 1, No. 10, with artwork by Barry Kida.

Victory or defeat for England hung in the balance as "High Over London, Bathed by Blinding, Sweeping Pencils of Light, A Dogfight of Desperate Importance Takes Place!"

Out of Italy, Hitler had picked NINO TRANTI, The 'Whistling Killer,' who rides the wild winds in his silent "stinger." It was a memorable battle of two aerial aces that ended with Birdie and the "Silent Nazi Plane" racing toward one another each in the other's direct line of fire.

Neither expected to survive. Yet as the Italian flyer's plane flamed earthward, Birdie managed with a mangled wing to flutter to safety. "He Was The Toughest Yet," Airboy later told a British lass, Pat Royce.

But in the very next issue (AIR FIGHTERS COMICS, Vol. 1, No. 11, August 1943) the assignment was even tougher. Airboy's task--go to Bilgalden, Norway, to rescue the French General Ferrand, held prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp. Airboy brought the French high command officer back to England and freedom literally on a "wing and a prayer," with the general clutching onto the outside of Birdie's wing, as the bird-plane crashed-dived to safety onto the deck of a waiting British carrier.

Four super German aircraft with four super German pilots were Airboy's foes in mad sky action featured in Vol. 2, No. 1, AIR FIGHTERS of October, 1943. Goebbels, himself, had challenged the Allies to down these pilots, who flew planes named respectively "Pestilence," "Famine," "Death" and "War." Airboy accepted the challenge, almost loosing his life and Birdie in the process.

The Nazi snake even wended its way into the wilds of Central America and the ruins of an ancient Indian civilization in AIR FIGHTERS Vol. 2, No. 5, February, 1944. A legend foretold of a golden-haired youth who would come in a metal bird to free an enslaved people. The phrophecy was fullfilled as Airboy swept out of the skies to blast the hold acquired by the Germans over the remnant of the once mighty Mayans and washout the sign of the hated Nazi Swastika over Central America.

Advertisements carried in these early issues of Air Fighters Comics deserve some mention for they showed the thinking of an America at war.

"Boys! Be Ready For Enemy Attacks," forewarned one ad. How to do it? Send away for a JUNIOR AIR RAID WARDEN KIT. By clipping a coupon and sending $1.69 (postage to be paid on arrival) one would receive a carrying case holding a helmet, badge, a junior air warden arm band, a first aid kit, whistle, ID card, note book, report sheet, splints and a "gas mask."

As the ad said it was "an amazing opportunity for every full-blooded American boy to prepare himself and his buddies against emeny air attacks. Lots of fun! Exciting! Thrilling!

And patriotic too, for as the ad pointed out, "You owe it to your Uncle Sam to know just what to do in the event of an air attack." Not only that but a kit would help you make friends...

"Everyone of your friends will want to play with you...you will become the most popular boy in the block. All of your boy friends will want a kit. Be the first to proudly wear and use the many articles included in your Junior Air Raid Warden kit..."

After that "sell," there were few who even dreamt of buying the "AMAZING FORECASTER," a weather house advertised in the next issue, though perhaps they might consider sending a three-cent stamp to have their favorite snapshot ENLARGED as promised two issues later.

There were ads to learn cartooning and build muscles but the one that lives in the memory of boys of 1943 was the one for the "New COMMANDO Krak-A-Jap Machine Gun." One ignored the "Safe, Harmless!" tiny slogan; though the $1.98 asking price was a factor to be heavily considered. Even so and by sending right away, a lucky purchaser would soon be the proud possessor of a FREE 5-Power Telescope.

There was magic in the words..."How would you like to play "WAR" with your very own KRAK-A-JAP Machine Gun? So completely does it resemble the real machine gun used by our COMMANDOS, that you will get a thrill when you hold it in your hands...The gang will be green with envy if you are the first in your neighborhood to get a KRAK-A-JAP Commando Machine Gun...If the KRAK-A-JAP isn't more fun than a 'barrel of Monkeys," just return it within 10 days and we will refund your money in full."

Airboy had first encountered MISERY in the September, 1943, edition of Air Fighters Comics, Vol. 1, No. 12. When destiny brought the two together again, it was fortunate for Airboy that Valkyrie was on the scene and that she was in a tender, loving mood.

The meeting referred to took place in the January, 1946 issue of the Hillman magazine, now known as AIRBOY COMICS. Vol. 2, No. 12, is somewhat of an Airboy classic.

To tell of Misery is to speak of one of the strangest villains in comic book lore. Clad in a green shroud, Misery's face was often hidden in shadow. When the hood fell away, the head was nothing more than a grinning skull.

Misery was known as "the host of all evil." He was a thing, an inhuman being subservient to a master, whose identity was only hinted at but never told. And Misery's perpetual mission was to be the keeper of "The Airtomb", a ghostly plane piloted from "the Black Hole of Calcutta," taking the bravest and most heroic airmen of them all for its own.

As Misery told Airboy, "You Should Know That Evil Can Not Die," and thus he returned to claim Airboy for The Airtomb, three years from the time Airboy had first defeated him. But first Misery put Valkyrie under his strange spell.

In order that the former Nazi Airmaiden could go free, Airboy gave himself up willingly to Misery, gazing full at him and dropping unconscious from the sight. Lifting Airboy bodily, Misery prepared to cast him to his death onto sharpened stones far below.

"Oh, Watcher Over The Fearless And Courageous, Who Have Taken Wings Against The Sky--I Bring To You The GREATEST Of All Airmen!!!" Misery howled triumphantly. But Valkyrie, released from her spell, instead pushed Misery, himself, into the yawning abyss at the same time rescuing Airboy.

Yet Airboy and Valkyrie were far from safety. Fleeing in Birdie, they in turn are followed by the Airtomb. Misery is not dead after all and Airboy decides to attempt a feat never before done by mortal man. He lands Birdie right on one of the wings of the massive speeding craft of ghastly white.

Despite Valkyrie's warning, Airboy steps inside. "You've Come Back Like A Moth To The Flame, Eh, Airboy?" is Misery's

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mocking challenge. In hand-to-hand combat with the grinning entity, Airboy wins only to be overcome by sickening, suffocating vapors.

"Well, You Forced Me To Do It, Airboy! I've flooded The Airtomb With Helium! --And We Shall Float Off Into Space--Into Eternity--Never to Land Again--Once And For All, The Airtomb Has Claimed You!!!"

But in his boasting, Misery has forgotten Valkyrie. Concealed by the heavy vapor, she enters the Airtomb and carries Airboy to the safety of Birdie. Misery, beside himself with fury, angrily mutters:

"The Young Devil Has Escaped From His Very Grave!!--But The Curse Of A Thousand Dead Fliers Is Upon Him! I'll Get You, Airboy--I Vow That I Will!!!"

This then was Misery. A villain so hideous and evil, he rightfully takes his place alongside such comic book evil greats as the early Joker, Iron Jaw, Red Skull, The Hun and The Claw.

And as anxious as Valkyrie was to save Airboy's life in the above recounted story, she was equally anxious to bring it to an end in Airboy Comics, Vol. 4, No. 10, November, 1947. Her evil nature again has the upper hand and Valkyrie is training girl pilots to smuggle a dangerous drug into the United States for "a South American Syndicate."

A close friend of Airboy's does not realize Valkyrie is merely using him while pretending affection for him. In a mistaken belief that Airboy is deliberately trying to break he and Valkyrie up, the friend turns bitter. It takes a plane crash and the near death of Airboy before understanding is restored and Valkyrie is turned over to the law.

AIR FIGHTERS COMICS with whole number 23 became AIRBOY COMICS. Black Angel, Sky Wolf, Flying Dutchman and finally even Iron Ace dropped from the pages of Hillman-published comics. Airboy and Birdie, though would continue to wing their way into another decade before Hillman sounded the death knell for the laughing, golden-haired youth and his bat-winged plane of the heavens. The end would come with publication of AIRBOY COMICS, Vol. 10, No. 4, edition of May, 1953. In the interim Airboy stories would carry the artwork of such greats as Dan Barry (brother of Sy Barry-artist on the Phantom), Carmine Infantino, Barry Kida, Bernard Sachs, "Zolne," and others.

Airboy would act and live the ever-adventurous life of a hero. Live it to the heights in the most unforgettable Airboy story of them all. A story that would take two issues in the telling. A story of the stuff dreams are made of---a nightmare come to life.

Zolne was the artist and a better one couldn't have been chosen. Haunting panels, frightening scenes abound in number--the story of..... AIRBOY FIGHTS THE RATS.

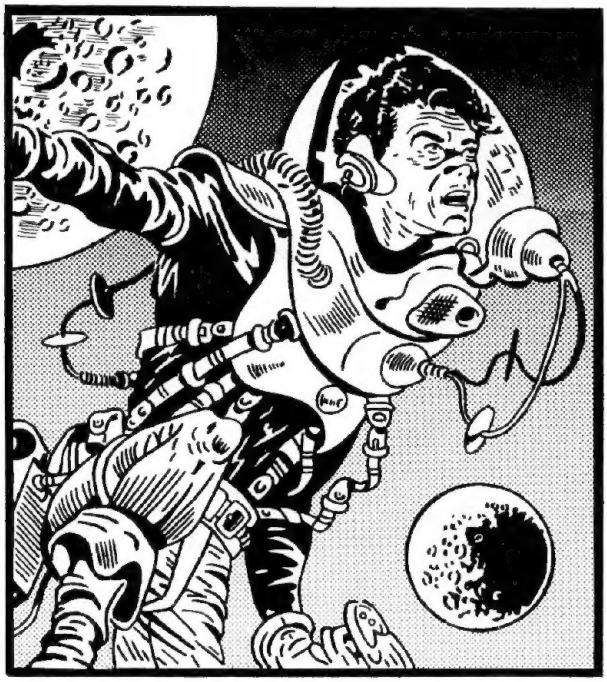
There exists in the animal kingdom few creatures--that have the ability of the Rat--to make a man's flesh crawl in instinctive horror. Capturing the sheer terror of the tale was Zolne's cover on the December, 1948, chronicle. Birdie hovering in mid-air. Thousands of rats scampering viciously below; others climbing with drawn teeth onto the wings. Airboy standing in the cockpit, his fists flailing at maddened rodents. A full-moon riding high in the sky and outlining hordes of bats descending in scalloped-wing attack to aid their four-footed brethern. Inside the book itself additional horror as officials dismiss the warning of a Professor that world-wide attack by the furry terrors is imminent. Outside Webster Heights, New Jersey, the attack becomes a reality as telephone-line repairmen find cables chewed upon and in making the discovery are attacked by a squeaking, snarling horde. "They Won't Get Me! Jump Joe! It's Easier Than ARRRGGGGHH!," screams one linesman jumping to his death, while atop the phone pole his companion is devoured by a black mass of writhing bodies.

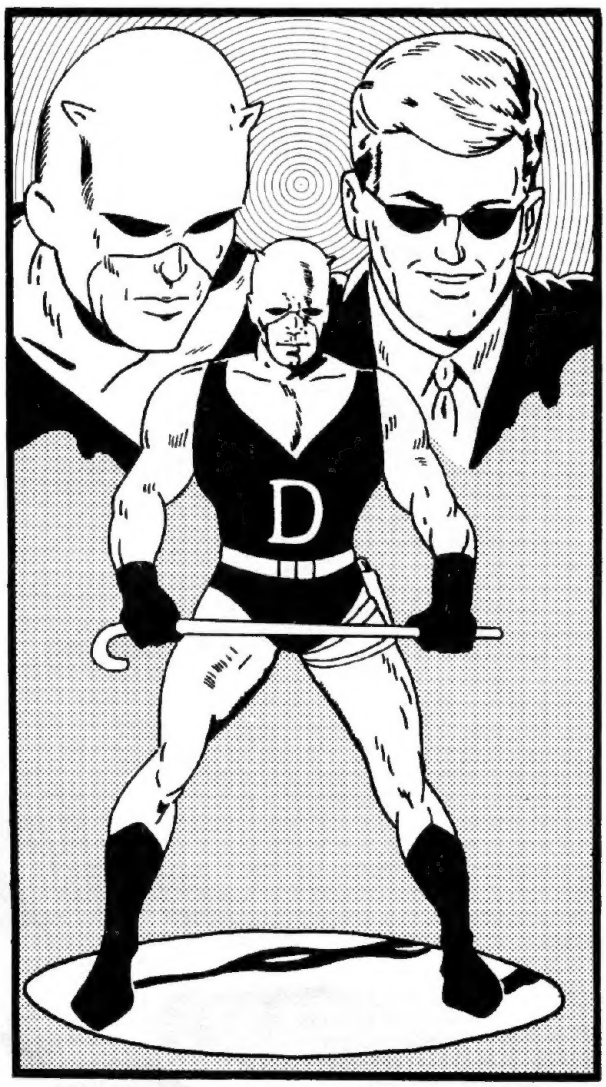
Only the beginning-for the Rat army by the millions swim the Hudson, clambering bridges and scooting through tunnels preparing to invade New York City. There are too many for humans to turn back, even with fire hoses, flamethrowers and mechanized might.

Airboy, with a desperate plan in mind, flies Birdie into the night only to be met by the "RAT AIR FORCE." Millions of wheeling, chittering bats, who by sheer weight of numbers, attempt to down Birdie. Flying directly into the center of a coming storm, Airboy manages to loose his winged pursuers. It is a scene from hell itself that Zolne depicts as Birdie rides streams of mind-wrecking aircurrents and splatterings of lightning. Bats swarm ten-thousand fold, their bodies buffeted; their wings rent by mighty wind. Airboy escapes and leads oil-laden bombers cross a Hudson River that is now a pathway of swimming rats bent on destruction. Oil drums hit water. "In Terried Frenzy, The Invading Rodents Drown By The Millions."

Yet, it is victory only for the moment. Airboy's worst fears are realized in the very next issue (Vol. 5, No. 12) dated January, 1949, as the Rats again strike against the society of man. To end the threat of rodent rule hopefully for all time, Airboy lets himself be captured by the Rats and leads U.S. bombers to the Rat Headquarters. They bomb Grand Culvert Dam and with the resulting flood, the march of the fanged-four-footers is halted. And even then, the world and Airboy wonder how many years it will be before Rats strike again.

Yes, Airboy is gone now. Perhaps, he and Birdie, sometimes, somewhere, still occasionally take to the skies to glide upon midnight winds, passing phantoms of time gone by. Perhaps, they are the shadow, the readers--now grown older--dimly perceive through the rising mists of a sultry, summer night, when time seems like it was so long ago.





Joe Orlando

Art and Article
by
BOB COSGROVE & MARTIN L. GREIM

JOE ORLANDO was born in Bari, Italy on April 4th, 1927. Probably Joe's parents, who migrated to the United States just two years later, little suspected that their son was to become one of the most respected artists and idea-men in the comic art world. They did "start him on the right track" tho', if unintentionally, by settling in New York City, the Vatican of the comics.

Like most artists, Joe began to show his talents at an early age, picking up pen, brush, and more often crayon to become the local DaVinci of his grade school. A veteran of Santa Claus sketches and assembly posters, at nine years old, jolting Joe enrolled in some art classes offered by his neighborhood Boy's Club.

Like so many other top cartoonists in today's comics scene, Joe attended the High School of Industrial Arts, where he studied Illustration. It was here that Joe first met as classmates, many of the people that were to become his future colleagues. After completeing high school, Orlando fell victim to the draft and served his time in the Occupation Army of Europe. Army life had its compensations though, for upon returning to the USA, Joe wasted no time in taking advantage of the G.I. bill, which made it possible for him to attend the Art Students League. In addition, the bill gave Joe the opportunity to attend classes with the noted illustrator Frank Riley, who Joe considers very influential in his own unique approach to comic art.

It was at this time that Joe began doing freelance work for various comic books, notably illoing "Chuck White" for Treasure Chest comics. As Joe's freelance career snowballed, he had the good fortune to become acquainted with famed illustrator Wallace Wood, and soon began working with him. Joe generally assisted with inking and background work, sharing Wood's studio above a Spanish Dance Club.

At this point however, a black page appeared in Joe's illustrating carreer. Disheartened by a bad experiance with an unscrupulous publisher, the disappointed Orlando abandoned comic books in favor of a job as a stock clerk.

Luckilly, Joe relented and soon began slaving over the Wood drawing board once again. Initially, Joe and Wally worked for the Avon Comics group. Most of their efforts were "Avon Fantasy Classics," such as "An Earthman on Venus" and "Space Detective." One of their better productions was "The Mask of Fu Manchu," based, of course, on Sax Rohmer's mysterious oriental archvillain, and featuring such Rohmer characters as Sir Denis Nayland Smith. The ruler of a gigantic secret organization known as the Si-Faan, the insidious Dr. Fu Manchu attempted to steal the mask of "El Mokanna" and a sacred sword. His purpose? To seize control of a fanatic horde--another step designed to give him mastery of the world.

Within the same year or so, the Orlando-Wood team also turned out "Captain Science" for Youthful Magazines. "Captain Science" was in reality Gordon Dane, who remained in his earth laboratory in 1950 for all of three panels in any given story, before zipping into outer space with his kid assistant Rip, and his girlfriend, Luana.

How much of the work was Orlando's, and how much was Wood's, only Joe and Wally know for sure. One thing is sure, however, to even the most casual observor of their early work--the style is very much Wally Wood's, Though not the Wally Wood we know today. Although very, very good, the Wood-Orlando art does not display the tremendous brush technique that is today evident in every Wood-overseen job. The composition is excellent, but somewhat cluttered. The figures, showing both Orlando and Wood influences, and in many cases "stock" Wood poses of today, show an almost sublimal Alex Raymond influence, and the influence of Reed Crandall upon Wood's art is very, very, apparent. While beautiful work, both the Avon and the Youthful efforts were hints of the stylistic mastery yet to come.

And come it did, beginning with the duo's dynamic drawings for the highly respected Entertainment Comics (EC) group, where Wally and Joe worked on just about all the EC books, from horror comics to the new direction VALOR. Here, the inking technique, while never as good as today, became sharper, and the detail became greater even tho' paradoxically, the clutter began to swiftly disappear. Dramatic lighting was a key factor in the elegance and style of the Wood work.

As EC began growing, however, more artists of top caliber were necessary. Even though it meant losing a capable assistant, Wood recommended Joe as the man for the job. It was as a regular EC staffer that Joe finally settled down and got married. His wife, Gloria, still works with the "remnant" of EC, as head of Mad Magazine's stalwart subscription department.

FROM EC TO DC

Joe's early solo work at EC is extremely similar to that of Wood's, although not as fantastically detailed as Wood's has now grown. The facial expressions--the inking technique--the composition of the panels--and especially the construction of the figures and treatment of clothes--all were Wally Woodish.

Orlando had learned much from Wood, but he was too much of an individualist to slavishly copy. Soon his inking style softened and became freer--his figures began to lose that carved out, solid look so evident in Wood's work. Faces elongated, and the treatment of mouths changed especially. Joe was fast becoming the individual stylist he is today.

Like his friend and colleague, Joe's first love was EC's pace setting science fiction tales. Pace-setting is truly the word for one story in particular, "Judgement Day". "Judgement Day" was the story of Cybrinia, a world of robots, which was to serve as a "test case." Originally, men had placed a handful of robots there to see if they would develop into a civilization worthy of inclusion in the existing Galactic Empire. On the surface, the robots had done well, reaching a 20th century level civilization. But beneath the surface, lay a social conflict between orange robots and blue robots. In effect, a robot-guised attack on racial discrimination. In 1953, the story was tragically behind the times as they should have been, but to EC's everlasting credit, far ahead of the times as they truly were.

Although equally adept at depicting any type of SF tale, many of Joe's stories were adaptations of the work of top science-fiction writers. Like such greats as Al Williamson and Wally Wood (Will you ever forget Wood's "There Will Come Soft Rains?), Joe adapted several stories from the patron saint of EC's SF line, Ray Bradbury. Two of his best Bradbury adaptations, "The Long Years," and "Outcast of the Stars," were reprinted in TOMMORROW MIDNIGHT, a Balentine paperback featuring EC adaptations of stories from Bradbury's works--notably his very famous MARTIAN CHRONICILES.

In the last 3 issues of WIERD SCIENCE FANTASY (before it became INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION), Joe created some of his most memorable work for EC--an adaptation of Otto Binder's "Adam Link-Robot", an excellent novel of historical importance in the Science Fiction field. The story of Adam Link was the story of a metal man of bolts and wires, far more human than many of his flesh and blood colleagues. When an accident caused the death of his creator and friend, the robot that could think like a man found himself accused of murder. Inevitably, people assumed he was a Frankenstein. Fortunatly however, people like Jack Hall, reporter, and Thomas Link, lawyer and nephew of Adam's inventor, were on hand to prevent the rest of humanity from making a tragic mistake.

In this early, superbly illustrated version of Adam, Joe Orlando created a sensetive portrayal of the human robot. The one flaw, however, was the elongated head he endowed Adam with, which tended to hinder the portrayal of Adam's human emotions.

But, because the world is an imperfect world, all good times DO come to an end, and all good things eventually meet destruction. So it was with what many people consider to be the finest comics group that has ever existed. In 1955, crushed by censorship, EC died. The talent that made it the company that it was, split up--some going to work for other companies, some freelancing, others going into more profitable realms of art.

Joe Orlando chose to return to the world of the freelance artist. Avon was gone, but the field was still ripe for talent. Over at Classics Illustrated, Orlando produced several stories, notably "The Tale of Two Cities," and "Julius Caesar."

Another market quick to capitalize on Joe's titantic talents was The Atlas Comic Group, forerunner of today's highly celebrated Marvel Comics Group. Recognizing Joe's flair for fantasy and Science-Fiction, Atlas lost no time in assigning him to their wide range of fantasy titles, including MYSTIC, WORLD OF FANTASY, ASTONISHING, and MARVEL TALES.

Joe's work during his stay at Atlas is extremely interesting. In some cases, his art bears a strong resemblence to that of his EC period. In other stories, Joe seems to be experimenting with his style, while in still other stories, the art is extremely similar to Joe's contemporary work. All of the Atlas stories were very well done. In them, Joe demonstrates exceptional skill in silhouette work and the portrayal of furniture. A good example of this is "Deadlock!" in WORLD OF FANTASY #14.

Plotwise, Joe's script material left something to be desired. Unlike such claims as "A MYSTERY TALE to hold you Breathless," the stories proved a quick cure for insomnia, with rather predictable plots. Most dealt with the misuse of some amazing scientific invention or discovery.

In addition to his work with Atlas, Joe began doing more and more work with MAD Magazine. Joe's work at MAD is unfortunatly not representative of the type of work he is capable of. Usually, his art is hampered by very poor material, of the type that has caused many to bemoan the decline of the magazine. His recent work illustrates this admirably. Joe has been stuck with "MAD Interviews...so and so, etc," a feature that at best qualifys as mildly humorous. Worse still has been his assignment to "Magazines for Special Professions," such as "Free-Loader Magazine," which certainly qualifies as one of the most humorless humor features ever to appear on the printed page.

At the same time, Joe also tried his hand at some advertising work, including a booklet on vitamins assisted by another EC artist, Roy G. Krenkel, well known to many ERB readers for his illustrations for Ace's ERB Martian series.

Around 1964, Warren Publications decided to venture into the comic publishing business. Warren, however created a comic book with a difference--CREEPY MAGAZINE, a slick cover, 35¢, black and white magazine, dealing with horror and using improved methods of reproduction, allowing wash and other varied special effects. This exciting company attracted some of the top names in the business--Frazetta, Colan, Crandall, Ditko, Mastroserio, Morrow, Torres, Craig, Severin, Williamson, and Wood, to name a few. One of the first people contracted was Joe Orlando, who in addition to contributing story ideas, turned out some very fine art, utilizing both wash and line drawing.

Exceptionally well drawn horror stories (and one or two poorer efforts) marked Joe's stay at Warren. "Return Trip!", in CREEPY #3 is an excellent example of Joe's outstanding draftsmanship. "Vampire Slayer!", in EERIE #5 (CREEPY'S companion magazine.) is a dramatic testimonial to Joe's creativity in layout and design.

The real "treat" involved in Joe's reunion with an EC-style horror mag, however, was his reunion-- and comicdom's--with another old friend, ADAM LINK, a pleasure heightened by Otto Binder's script adaptation from his original story. Here was Adam, once again, done entirely in a style uniquely Orlando's. And this time, Joe corrected his previous error, giving Adam a more human shaped face, while still retaining enough of a mechanical quality to give Adam a certain aloofness. Fortunatly, Adam's second stay in comics proved more enduring than the last, and his adventures, illoed by Joe Orlando, continued on a semi-regular basis until the departure of Archie Goodwin as WARREN'S editor. Fans of Adam are hoping that in the near future, Warren will see fit to reinstate the series. The artist? Joe Orlando, of course!

While Stan Lee was still ushering in the Marvel Age of Comics, Marvel had ushered in a new character, DAREDEVIL by name. In his first issue, under the fine artistry of that old stylist, Bill Everett, DD got off to a flying start. Unfortunatly however, Everett was unable to continue the feature, which fell into the waiting hands of Joe Orlando. Joe's art on this feature was excellent. For three issues, Daredevil battled Electro, the Purple Man, and the OWL. In addition to worthy portrayals of these menaces, Joe turned in a very fine portrayal of the Fantastic Four. Unfortunatly, the one character he didn't turn out a fine portrayal of was Daredevil himself! Why? Who can say. No one, including Joe's old buddy Wally Wood, seemed able to draw DD's seemingly simple costume with the same charm that Everett could. When Wally took the feature over, he finally gave up and redesigned DD's costume completely. Then again, part of the responsibility may lie with Joe's inker on the feature, Vince Colleta.

With issue #62 of Showcase, Joe Orlando turned up at DC. This was the origin issue of DC's humor magazine "The Inferior Five". Though in later issues the art went downhill, Joe Orlando's version, in the first issue, was outstanding. His portrayal of The Inferior Five vs. Dr. Gruesome, although humorous, also had a quality about it reminiscent of the action heroes of the '40's - dark shading and abreviated backgrounds.

At any rate, with Carmine Infantino's promotion to Editorial Director of NPP, Orlando became an editor, where he brings the same talent and skill to the titles he edits, as he does to his art. Joe's fans can only hope that in addition to his editorial chores at DC, the multi-talented Mr. Orlando will find time to do some comic strips as well.

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DONNA'S DOODLES

Miss Donna L. Astin is the topic for this issues Ama-CONtributor spot. Though the title of this article is "Donna's Doodles", her art is far from doodling. Rather, it is a splendid piece of artistic interpretation. Donna is one of the few female fans who can draw and she has a style all her own.

I became acquainted with Donna through Bob Cosgrove, editor of Champion. Donna had done some work for him and I was so impressed I asked if she would also work for me. I'm in her debt that she said yes. The Hawkman drawing, on this page, is the first super-hero drawing she has had in print. 'Till now, her art has been confined to science fiction and sword & sorcery, but since this publication is basically super-hero oriented I asked her to do a hero drawing and to say the least I thought the end result terrific.

In keeping with my policy of spotlighting some of fandoms more talented fans; I put the following questions to Donna, so you could get to know her better.

M.G. How did you first become interested in comics?

D.A. Being both a reader and an artist for a very long time, comics were and are a natural source of enjoyment for me. I got into the serious world of comic fandom quite by accident, as I was searching for the film-based comic "Master of the World" and had to get in touch with private collectors in my search. I finally was able to obtain a copy from Larry Herndon, a noted fan. I also got a sketch published once in "Creepy", and I assume that this is where Bob Cosgrove "found" me. He and you are almost totally responsible for rekindling my interest in this field.

M.G. Do you have any hobbies?

D.A. So far as hobbies go, I have quite a few and I don't know where to start. I'm chiefly a collector: books (mostly on art), stamps (mostly foreign), records (mostly orchestral), pets (mostly hamsters), photos (mostly of Vincent Price). I am interested in cars, both for mechanics and styling (chiefly Fords), and am extremely fond of drawing and painting mythological or fantastic creatures. This is probably my greatest hobby.

HAWKMAN

ROBOR

M.G. Do you have a favorite super-hero?

D.A. I like Namor, The Sub-Mariner best and Thor second. Possible reasons why are:
Namor is Spock-like (or Spock is Namor-like) and Namor is semi-human or fantastic. I have a sympathetic passion for super-semi-human animals too. Too bad Atomic Mouse is gone, I really liked him.

M.G. Do you have any favorite ama- super heroes?

D.A. I'm not that familiar with ama-super heroes, but of what I've seen, I like Xal-Kor, the Human Cat, for the same reasons I like Prince Namor.

M.G. Who is your favorite comic artist?

D.A. Definitely Angelo Tories! Frank Frazetta follows a close second, and whoever inks Namor for Marvel Comics. (I believe you're refering to John Buscema inked by Dan Adkins, Donna. - MLG)
Angelo Tories has a good clean style which, although matched by Al Williamson, is apart from his by being bolder and heavier.

And so my interview with Donna Astin comes to a close. I hope it gave you fans some insight into the background of one of fandom's top female artists. You'll be seeing more of Donna's work in future issues of The Comic Crusader. I feel fortunate to have her as a regular contributor to this publication.

MONGO MANIA #6.

KANG

Art and Article by MARTIN L. GREIM

Long after FLASH GORDON overthrew Mongo's tyrant MING, another evil pretender to Mongo's throne appeared. His name...KANG the CRUEL. Kang tried to take over Mongo by gaining control of its Atom power. Flash foiled this plot and drove Kang into the wastelands of Mongo. There Kang became the wizard king of the Fur-Men. Flash followed him, but once again Kang eluded him and almost killed him by firing an atom charge into the Fur-Men's village - destroying it. Flash came to grips with Kang again, in Kang's undersea fortress. There he, Dale Arden and Teohno (Kang's chief scientist) managed to destroy the city by causing stores of "Mongonium" to blow up in a tremendous atomic explosion, after they had rocketed through the fortresses sea dome. Finally, the strain of defeat, drove Kang out of his mind. A fitting end for an evil tyrant.

The art, for the most part, was not by Alex Raymond, but rather by Austin Briggs. Briggs was born in 1909 near Humbolt, Minn. He has had many imitators, but has kept his work fresh and contemporary. He grew up in Detroit and began illustrating for newspapers. After a few years, he came to New York and worked for Collier's Magazine and other slick magazines. During the Depression he did a variety of work from movie posters to "Flash Gordon". Briggs worked on Flash Gordon daily strips, and when Alex Raymond was drafted in 1944, he took over the Sunday strips as well. Since then, he's worked on Blue Book, Redbook, Cosmopolitan, Saturday Evening Post, Life and Look. Austin Briggs is now on the Famous Artists staff.

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THE DAYS OF THE J.S.A. #2

FEATURING: GREEN LANTERN

by Martin L. Greim

ALAN SCOTT is the sole survivor of a train wreck caused by sabotage. He survived only because he was holding a green storm lantern that had been part of the trains fixtures. He finds that this green lantern is a battery of power, created from a huge meteor that had crashed in ancient China. The lantern instructs Scott to fashion a ring from its metal and that by touching the ring to the green lantern, every 24 hours, the ring will be charged with great power. Power to protect him from all but wood.

Scott uses this power to bring the sabateurs of the train to justice. After completing his first mission, he creates a costume and names himself after the source of his power.....THE GREEN LANTERN.

(*Note...In Green Lantern's early days, the ring only protected him from metal.)

Green Lantern was a charter member of THE JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA. When he first met with the other members, he told them of how he broke up a crime syndicate and exposed a crime czar who had framed Commissioner Mason.

His first actual mission with the JSA involved him in a plot, by the Germans, to jam all of America's radio frequencies. This was to be accomplished from a dirigible, camoflaged by clouds. Green Lantern finds the great balloon and after a battle with the Germans aboard, destroys it...thus ending the menace.

With issue #7 of All Star Comics, Green Lantern became the chairman of the Justice Society. In this adventure he and his fellow members, raised $1,000,000 for war orphans. This issue also marked his taking a leave of absence from the JSA. Green Lantern had been given his own book and wouldn't appear in the JSA again until issue #24.

This issue was a patriotic issue, in which the JSA proved to a young American the war like nature of Germany. G. L. was so moved by this adventure, that he became an active member once more.

Of all the members of The Justice Society, Green Lantern has saved them from defeat the most times.

It was his ring that enabled the JSA to go back in time and correct the changes DEGATON had caused in history. (All Star #35.) It was Green Lantern who saved the day when all the other "All Stars" had been captured by the INJUSTICE SOCIETY OF THE WORLD in All Star #37. It was also G. L., aided by Black Canary, who freed the JSA from a hypnotic spell, when they fought the Injustice Society again in issue #41. With issue #52, "The Secret Conquest of Earth", Green Lantern used his ring to protect his fellow members from the hypnotic powers of THE FOUR KINGS. In "The Man Who Conquered the Solar System", it was G. L. who freed the JSA from the helmets of THE CONQUEROR. In this story, he not only fought menaces of two worlds, but the mind dominated Justice Society as well.

No telling of Green Lantern's participation in the Justice Society would be complete without mentioning "The Revenge of Solomon Grundy". In All Star #38 this macabre menace battled each member of the JSA while on his way across country to find his mortal enemy..... Green Lantern. It finally took the combined might of the JSA and G. L.'s power ring to exile Solomon Grundy to the moon.

Although Green Lantern was part of a team, he was a loner too. When the Justice Society split into teams, as a rule he would go off on his own. Whether it was because he was the odd man (The JSA had 7 members at this time) or because he was the most powerful, is not known. However, one thing is certain, Green Lantern was a powerful force in the Justice Society of America.

Green Lantern on this and opposite page is Copyright...National Perodical Pub.

FANDOM'S FINEST

by BOB COSGROVE
with a forward by
Martin L. Greim

It has been stated before, that this column is to highlight and review the best of fandom's efforts in the amateur hero field.

Although both Bob Cosgrove and I have personal involvement in our own ama-heroes, we both have favorites besides them. The ama-hero Bob reviews this issue is mine.

Ever since I became acquainted with fandom, some years back, The ECLIPSE has stayed in my mind as one of fandom's better ama-hero efforts. When I first thought of publishing a fanzine, I said to myself, "Boy! Wouldn't it be great if I could have an ECLIPSE by Foss". Now, at last, I have.

So you see, each of us who is ama-hero conscious has his own hang-up and the ECLIPSE by Foss is mine. - MLG

The last issue of All-American Comics brought death to many fine characters--not the worst of these was a hero called Dr. Mid-Nite.

A decade later, the "fanzine" phenomena sprung up, marking the graves of fallen costumed heroes with ditto, mimeo, and on occasion, photo-offset memorials. Most memorials took the form of articles, reminiscenoing on those "nostalgic days", or angirly calling for the return of The Hawk. One memorial, however, was an actual re-incarnation of his predecessor--in the footsteps of blind Dr. McNider, came Dr. Craig Prince--"Master of the Midnight Hours -- Silent, Swift-as-a-Shadow - Sentinel of a great city--Cat-like Nemesis of Injustice--".....THE ECLIPSE!

MASTER OF THE MIDNIGHT HOURS... SWIFT, SILENT-AS-A-SHADOW SENTINEL... CAT-LIKE NEMESIS OF INJUSTICE —
the Eclipse
© 1965 by RONN FOSS

The Eclipse, launched with the blessings of DC editor Julius Schwartz, first appeared in Alter-Ego #5 - written by Drury Moroz and drawn by Ronn Foss.

The origin story related how, when Dr. Craig Pierce refused to give radium to a gang of thugs, they attempted to murder him in a faked lab explosion. Miraculously, Craig lived, but developed extreme chronic light sensitivity. In other words, Craig was blinded for life.

"Disoharged from the hospital, however, Craig--(soon discovered) that his condition--(was) far from a complete liability." By the light of day, he was totally blind, but in darkness, he could see perfectly. And with the night, came strange powers--the ability to pass through solid matter and to become invisible.

Inevitably, Craig made the decision to become a crime fighter. "To augment his new found powers, he devised a number of ingenious inventions--" infra red goggles to allow him to see in daylight and, using the principle of the laser beam, a gun that emits a pure opaque blackness.

One of Craig's more interesting contraptions was a special suit. When Craig opened his specially constructed belt-buckle, exposing the photo cell beneath, the suit became a costume.

Not unsurprisingly, Craig used his powers to capture the criminals who caused his blindness. At the end of the story, a complication was introduced--the welfare board sent Teresa Aster, a beautiful nurse, to care for the "invalid" Dr. Pierce.

The origin story was an excellent one, in spite of the fact that much of the dialogue seemed almost "lifted" from Batman.

In his second adventure (In Alter Ego #8), the Eclipse exposed a "Haunted House" plot. Altho not as good as the origin story, the sequel was a good one.

Garbed in striking costume, and armed with a daringly original weapon, the Eclipse was a far more important contribution to fandom than Dr. Mid-Nite was to prodom. Unfortunatly, for fandom, the Eclipse's adventures have been too few and far between. For the next appearance of this dynamic hero, drawn by the talented Ronn Foss, we (or our decendants) will just have to await a future issue of Alter-Ego. Or perhaps--The Comic Crusader?

Bob Cosgrove, fandom's ama-hero reviewer, will be back next issue. Why not drop Bob a card or letter suggesting the ama-hero you'ld like to see reviewed.
His address is: BOB COSGROVE
58 MASS. AVE
BRAINTREE, MASS.
02185.

Mr. A.
by Ditko
WHAT HAPPENS TO A MAN WHEN HE REFUSES TO UPHOLD THE GOOD?
COPYRIGHT © 1969 BY STEVE DITKO
GRAINE, WE'RE THE COMMUNITY'S LEADING CITIZENS! WE WANT YOU TO UNDERTAKE A PRIVATE INVESTIGATION ON CRIME IN THE CITY, DIG UP FACTS AND WE'LL SEE THAT LEGAL ACTION IS TAKEN TO WIPE OUT CRIME AND CORRUPTION!
WHY DID YOU PICK ME, MR. SWET!
YOU'RE THE KIND OF MAN WE NEED AND WANT, AN UNCOMPROMISING ENEMY OF CRIME AND INJUSTICE!
WITH OUR INFLUENCE, WE CAN FORCE ACTION! THIS WON'T BE ANY WHITE-WASH JOB, OUR GOAL IS A CLEAN STATE FOR DECENT PEOPLE!
WE GUARANTEE YOU, NOTHING IS GOING TO STOP US! WE'RE GOING TO ROOT OUT THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT WHEREVER THEY ARE UNCOVERED BUT WE NEED FACTS!
I'LL ACCEPT THE JOB, MR. SWET, ON THE CONDITION THAT JUSTICE RULES THE FINDINGS! EVERYONE WILL BE TREATED ACCORDING TO THE FACTS UNCOVERED — NO EVASIONS!
OF COURSE NOT, GRAINE, NO ONE WILL BE DENIED ANY PRAISE OR DAMNATION THAT HE HAS COMING TO HIM!
WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO MAKING CRIME IN OUR STATE JUST A MEMORY!
AT GRAINE'S FIRST REPORT..
THESE ARE THE RULING RACKETEERS! THEY HAVE A HAND IN EVERY CORRUPT AND ILLEGAL OPERATION AS INDICATED!
THEY'RE OUR TARGET, THE GUILTY ONES, WITH THEM GONE, CRIMINAL ACTIVITY WILL DRY UP AND DIE!
A GREAT JOB, REX, KEEP DIGGING AND DON'T ALLOW ANYONE TO STOP YOU!
GRAINE'S REPORT IS THOROUGH! HOW DID THOSE RATS MANAGE TO STAY FREE FOR SO LONG, ALL THOSE ARRESTS AND NO CONVICTIONS? THIS TIME, NO ONE IS GETTING OFF THE HOOK!
THESE ARE THE MIDDLE MEN, THE CORRUPT, THEY GIVE THE CRIMINALS PROTECTION, INFLUENCE, RESPECTABILITY AND POWER!
BUT THEY'RE JUST UNPRINCIPLED TYPES - NOT REAL CRIMINALS! I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO GET EVIDENCE ON THE BOSSES, IT'S THEM WE WANT TO WIPE OUT!
YOU HAVE TO SEE THE WHOLE CRIME STRUCTURE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT SUPPORTS AND GIVES EVIL ITS DESTRUCTIVE POWER!
BAH! THE ONLY EVIL IS THE CRIME LEADERS!

EVIL BY ITSELF HAS NO POWER, EVIL SURVIVES BY THE POWER OF GOOD USED IN EVIL'S SERVICE! READ THE REPORT TO LEARN HOW THE CORRUPT SUPPORT THE EVIL BY DRAINING AND USING THE POWER OF THE GOOD AGAINST THE GOOD!
WE DON'T WANT LECTURES JUST EVIDENCE TO JAIL THOSE CRIME BOSSES!
DO YOU WANT TO CONTINUE THE INVESTIGATION?
--Y---YES OF COURSE!
WE KNOW ALL ABOUT GOOD AND EVIL, THAT'S WHY WE'RE DOING THIS!
HIS REPORT IS DISTURBING! THE CORRUPT DO CONTRIBUTE A LOT TO RACKETEER'S INFLUENCE AND POWER!
THAT'S WHY WE HAVE TO NAIL THE BOSSES! GRAINE'S SERMONS WON'T STOP CORRUPTION. A JAIL WILL!
THESE ARE" LEGITIMATE "MEN WHO HAVE CONNECTIONS WITH RACKETEERS, EACH SIDE USING THE OTHER TO CHEAT THE HONEST! TH'
THEY'RE ALL FRIENDS OF OURS..RESPECTABLE...!
THIS IS OUTRAGEOUS! YOU'RE SAYING..NO.... I REFUSE TO BELIEVE IT!
THIS IS A DIRTY SMEAR!
CHECK THE REPORTS AND JUDGE THE FACTS FOR YOURSELVES!
FACTS CAN HAVE DIFFERENT MEANINGS, THERE ARE NO ABSOLUTE TRUTHS!
THOSE MEN ARE ABOVE SUSPICION, I DON'T CARE WHAT ANY REPORT SAYS!
YOU WANT TO CONTINUE THE INVESTIGATION?
YOU MEAN SMEAR CAMPAIN!
WE'LL LET YOU KNOW GOOD NIGHT!
HOW CAN WE EVEN THINK OF TAKING ANY POSITION AGAINST OUR FRIENDS, IT'S SCANDALOUS...SOCIAL SUICIDE! @%*# WHY DIDN'T GRAINE STICK WITH CRIME BOSSES? THEY'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO HAVE TO BE NAILED!
GRAINE PUT US, NOT THE BOSSES ON A SPOT!
TOO MANY INNOCENT PEOPLE WILL BE HURT IF WE CONTINUE! GRAINE DOESN'T CARE, THEY'RE NOT HIS FRIENDS! ALEX, I'M QUITTING THIS SMEAR CAMPAIN!
AND I'M NOT CONDEMNING OUR FRIENDS BECAUSE THEY'RE HUMAN! THEY MAY HAVE MADE SOME BAD JUDGEMENTS, BUT THEY'RE NOT BAD! ALEX, ARE YOU WITH US OR WITH GRAINE?
BUT THE REPORTS?!...I... I..I'M WITH YOU, OF COURSE!
2

WE'RE DROPPING THE INVESTIGATION, GRAINE, IF WE CONTINUE, TOO MANY INNOCENT PEOPLE WILL GET HURT!
THEN I'LL FINISH WHAT WE STARTED ON MY OWN!
YOU CAN'T WE FORBID IT! DON'T YOU CARE ABOUT THE MISERY YOU WILL CAUSE!
YOU IGNORE THE CRIME BOSSES AND ENDANGER THE LIVES OF DECENT FAMILIES -OF MEN WHO MAY HAVE MADE HUMAN ERRORS! WHAT ARE YOU REALLY AFTER?
THE TRUTH, JUSTICE! TOO MUCH CORRUPTION HAS BEEN UNCOVERED TO QUIT! ELIMINATING IDIOTS WILL NOT CREATE INTELLIGENT MEN AND REMOVING EVIL BOSSES WILL NOT MAKE CITIZENS GOOD! IT IS NOT WHAT YOU ARE AGAINST BUT WHAT YOU ARE FOR THAT IS IMPORTANT! BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING UNLESS YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT IS THE GOOD AND TAKE THE ACTIONS TO UPHOLD THAT GOOD! WHEN I HAVE UNCOVERED ENOUGH EVIDENCE I'LL TURN IT OVER TO THE AUTHORITIES!
THEORIES ARE NO GOOD WHEN YOU HAVE TO BE PRACTICAL!
STOP THE PREACHING AND BE REALISTIC! OUR REPUTATIONS ARE AT STAKE, WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO TO US-TO OUR FRIENDS? HOW CAN YOU BE SO HEARTLESS!
YOU REFUSE TO ACCEPT OR ACT ON THE TRUTH! I WON'T JOIN YOU IN PRETENDING THAT TRUTH DOES NOT EXIST OR MATTER!
WE HAVE TO STOP HIM! HE'LL INVOLVE US---- WHAT WILL OUR FRIENDS THINK? WE'RE GOING TO BE HATED AND SMEARED! ALEX, WHAT CAN WE DO?
GRAINE WON'T LISTEN TO REASON, HE HAS NO PITY! HE HAS TO BE MADE TO GIVE UP THIS SMEAR CAMPAIN!
I'LL GET HENRY RATH, GRAINE'S PUBLISHER. TO STOP HIM!
ALEX, I'D FIRE THAT ARROGANT UNCOMPROMISING GRAINE IF I COULD! HE WAS MY BROTHER'S PET WHEN MY BROTHER WAS PUBLISHER AND HIS CONDITION FOR ME TAKING OVER THE PAPER AFTER HE DIED WAS THAT GRAINE WAS FREE TO PRINT HIS COLUMN HIS WAY! IF I INTERFERE OR KICK GRAINE OUT, I'LL LOSE THE PAPER! MY ★●✱! BROTHER! BUT I'LL DO WHATEVER I CAN TO FOUL UP, GRAINE! YOU HAVE MY OATH ON THAT!
DAILY CRUSADE
WE CAN DO EACH OTHER A LOT OF GOOD, HENRY! I HAVE SOME VERY IMPORTANT FRIENDS I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET!
SORRY, GRAINE, THE WORD IS OUT, WE CAN'T HELP YOU!
"CAN'T"? YOU MEAN YOU WON'T STAND UP FOR WHAT IS RIGHT!
WE'RE NEUTRAL!
WHICH MEANS YOU REFUSE TO JUDGE BETWEEN A TRUTH AND A LIE!
TRUTH? LIE? WHO CAN EVER KNOW?
A WARNING, GRAINE, LAY OFF OR LEGAL ACTION WILL BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU! THE INNOCENT WILL BE PROTECTED FROM UNPRINCIPLED PUBLICITY SEEKERS LIKE YOU!
IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN PROTECTING THE INNOCENT, FIRST MAKE SURE THEY ARE AND DON'T PROVIDE ANY HELP TO THE GUILTY!
3

THIS DEAL IS PROFITABLE FOR BOTH OF US, LEM! ....LEM, REX GRAINE IS SNOOPING AROUND, HE THINKS YOU'RE TIED UP WITH RACKETEERS!
HA! HA! LET HIM SNOOP, ALEX, I HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE!
I HAVE TO WARN THE MOB!
WE HAVE A SACRED DUTY NOT TO JUDGE OUR FELLOW MEN TOO UNKINDLY, TO ACCEPT THEM WITH ALL THEIR FAULTS BECAUSE WE ARE ALL IMPERFECT! WE ARE ONLY HUMAN!
MR. SWET UNDERSTANDS HUMAN NATURE! IT IS CRUEL TO BELIEVE THAT THE WAY ANYONE ACTS MAKES HIM BETTER OR WORSE THAN ANYONE ELSE! WE ARE ALL WITH SIN!
YES, WE'RE ONLY HUMAN SO I DON'T BELIEVE IN CONDEMNING MY FELLOW MEN, WE MUST SHOW THEM MERCY, OVERLOOK THEIR VICES AND NOT TO EXPECT TOO MUCH OF THEM! WE'RE ALL ALIKE, WHO'S TO JUDGE?
IT'S MEN LIKE YOU, MR. SWET, WHO OFFER HOPE AND INSPIRATION TO MANKIND BY REJECTING THE CRUEL VIEWS BASED ON ANY KIND OF "LOGICAL" PRINCIPLES OR STANDARDS!
ALEX, VOG'S SON IS GOING TO MARRY MY DAUGHTER AND VOG'S ON GRAINE'S LIST! GRAINE CAN RUIN OUR BUSINESS MERGER, ME AND THE MARRIAGE!... I'M DESPERATE!
EVEN GRAINE HAS HIS PRICE! THAT WAS HIS ANGLE ALL ALONG, HE HAD US FOOLED, THAT'S WHY HE'S NEVER PRINTED ANYTHING... HE'S WAITING FOR A PAY-OFF, THAT SNEAKY. CROOK!
ALRIGHT, GRAINE, WE'LL PAY! HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT TO BLEED US FOR?
SO I'M OFFERED A BRIBE FROM OUR "LEADING CITIZENS" TO PROTECT THE CORRUPT!
THE RESULTS OF YOUR UGLY KEY-HOLE SNOOPING WILL HURT THE INNOCENT THE MOST!
WHY SHOULD ANYONE ASSUME GUILT OR PENALIZE HIMSELF FOR ANOTHER'S CRIME! VICE OR VIRTUE ISN'T INHERITED OR CAUGHT LIKE A COLD! MY ACTIONS DON'T MAKE ANYONE ELSE GOOD OR BAD!
NO, PERCY..!
YOU INHUMAN... I WON'T LET YOU RUIN MY DEALS -DIRTY MY REPUTATION!
MEN HAVE TO BE JUDGED BY THEIR ACTIONS.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
A CASE OF ASSAULT AND I HAVE SOME "LEADING CITIZENS" AS WITNESSES!
GO ON, MR. SWET, TELL THE OFFICER, EXACTLY WHAT WAS SAID AND DONE!
Part 2 Next Issue!
4

7 SOLDIERS OF VICTORY

Art: STEVE FRITZ
Article: BOB COSGROVE

Some of fandom's more cynical members have often made the point that the "Golden Age" of Comics might better be referred to as the "Golden Age of Swiping." Not swiping in the sense of art, although there was plenty of that too, but swiping in the sense of ideas. DC had the Flash, so Quality had Quicksilver, and Timely had the Whizzer, and so on down the line. Even within the same company there was swiping. Batman had his Batcave, so Superman suddenly needed a Fortress of Solitude, Green Arrow needed an Arrow Cave, and even the Martian Manhunter had to have a secret cave hideaway, guarded by "Zook," his faithful companion.

Fandom's favorite group of heroes, the legendary "Justice Society of America," was hardly an exception to this rule of thumb. Timely came out with the All-Winners Squad, who were better done than most of the JSA stories, and National Periodical Publications quickly copied their own success with the Law's Legionaires, or, as they were more often called, THE SEVEN SOLDIERS OF VICTORY. This article relates their origin.

According to the magazine, the characters who made up the Legion were favorites from various comics in the DC line. They were the Crimson Avenger, from Detective comics, Green Arrow and Speedy from More Fun, the Shining Knight from Adventure, Vigilante from Action, and the Star Spangled Kid and Stripesy, from Star Spangled Comics. In actuality, none of these features were ever hits, or especially well done, except for Frazetta's later work on the Shining Knight, and Vigilante, who was almost always well-drawn by Mort Meskin, one of the most gifted story tellers in comic books.

The origin story, in Leading Comics #1, 1941, told how a master criminal received a death sentance. This, however, was not a legal sentance, but a sentance from God. A doctor informed the Hand that he was dying of an incurable malady. The Hand had been, in his own words, "A Napoleon of Crime, whose master-strokes had stunned the world with crimes the police were never able to solve".

Stunned by this bitter news of dying life, the Hand lamented that his "greatest coups were still ahead of me! Foolproof schemes, planned here in detail! Now, they will never be carried out!"

Those words might have marked the end of the arch-villains reign of plunder, had a newspaper headline not caught his eye. The headline told how criminal "Big Caesar" was sentanced to 20 years in the penitentary. Realizing that there were other "good men" in prison, capable of executing his schemes, the Hand decided to go out in a blaze of glory. Reaching for his phone, the Hand set in motion wheels that would "crowd Captain Kidd and Jesse James right out of the history books."

Newspaper headlines screamed the news: "RED DRAGON BLASTS WAY TO FREEDOM!" "AUTOGIRO FREES PROF. MERLIN". "BIG CAESAR CRUSHES (The letterer most likely should have written 'crashes') OUT!" "NEEDLE PIERCES PRISON WALL!" And, simultaneously, gunmen ambush a police squad on its way to raid the hideout of the DUMMY, infamous kidnaper.

"By devious ways the five fugitive criminals arrive at the mysterious hilltop house, where the HAND awaits them." Explaining that all of them owed their liberty to him, the Hand proposed that each of these men act as one of his fingers, executing his perfectly planned crimes. However, he warned them that in carrying the crimes out, each would be opposed by such worthy opponents as Green Arrow and The Crimson Avenger. The criminals proved agreeable, and the Hand gave them their instructions for each crime.

The next day, a full page ad appeared in newspapers in all sections of the country, challenging Green Arrow, the Shining Knight, the Crimson Avenger, The Vigilante, and The Star Spangled Kid to participate in the "greatest criminal chase in history." In answer, each of the challenged crime fighters gathered Tuesday at 10 PM in Gotham City Auditorium, where the Hand had arranged to contact them.

Promptly at ten, the lights dim and the grinning face of the Hand appears on a conveniant screen, and informs his foes of the whereabouts of his various leiutenants. As they disband to meet the challenge, Green Arrow suggests to his fellow crime fighters that the seven meet again in Gotham Auditorium a week from that Tuesday, to report to one another and to "consider furthur the problem of the HAND himself!"

It is the GREEN ARROW, and his "dynamic protege SPEEDY," who first encounter the sinister Hand's mechinations of evil, as they head toward Death Valley in their ARROWCAR, which was inexplicably refered to as "The Arrowplane." Although they hope to take Professor Merlin by surprise, Green Arrow has a hunch that The Hand has told Merlin to expect them--a hunch that proves totally correct.

The battle is soon to begin, for high above the flashing

Arrowcar, is the Sinister Aircraft of Prof. Merlin. As Merlin yanks a lever, a bomb hurtles downward, but is detonated before contact by the lightning swift shaft of the Green Arrow. It is interesting to note that in these early adventures, GA had none of the ridiculous shafts that later marred his career, but only the plain, ordinary arrows, which proved remarkably effective in accomplishing what he set out to do.

After escaping from another of Merlin's traps, the Emerald Archer and his scarlet assistant follow Merlin to a mine shaft, which Merlin has learned of by torturing an eccentric desert hermit.

However, when the archers close in on their prey, the greedy Merlin seeks to dynamite the shaft, sealing it off for his return. Instead, the rotten timbers of the mine collapse, sealing the evil professor's doom.

Next to meet danger, this time at the hands of the Nefarious Needle, is the Star Spangled Kid and Stripesy. Like the rest of the 7 Soldiers, the Kid and Stripesy had no super powers, only gadgets, like their "steelite" coils, and their unbelievable car, a Rolls Royce that could become a racing car, a helecopter, and a rocketship. The team of SSK & S was a twist on the usual "kid-sidekick gimmick", which had the Star Spangled Kid as the brains of the team, and the adult Stripesy as the lackey.

The task of the duo was to prevent the Needle from stealing a ray gun from Brighten Laboratories, and although they failed in this, they soon caught up with the Needle, who was completing his major crime, the destruction of the Panama Canal. Before the ray-gun could destroy its target, the STAR-ROCKET RACER, the aforementioned car-of-all trades, blocks the rays, causing them to ricochet, destroying the supports beneath the "tall tower of treachery," who tumbled from his perch into the waiting steelite lariot of the Star Spangled Kid.

Now, it was the Crimson Avenger's turn to foil the schemes of mob-leader Big Caesar. The Crimson Avenger, always drawn ten heads tall, in the wayout but good style of Jack Lehti, had recently been converted from a man of mystery, Green Hornet type, to a costumed adventurer of the Batman style. In the change-over, he was gifted with an oriental sidekick named Wing, who although treated with equality, was drawn in cartoon oriental style. Perhaps it was a measure of prejudice that unlike Speedy and Stripesy, Wing never appeared in the opening or closing chapter, and was never a soldier. On the other hand, maybe it was because DC didn't like the sound of "The Eight Soldiers of Victory."

At any rate, these two, in a well drawn story, prevented Big Caesar from blacking out, then raiding, Broadway, and successfully sent his mob to prison.

Over the little known Forest Valley of the Wamona came the Red Dragon, "horrible henchman of the Hand," swooping low over his objective.

Upon landing, the Red Dragon guns down the cheif of the Wamona Indians, who greets him in peace. Before, however, the tribe can attack, the elderly medicine man reminds them of the prophecy of the Wendigo. The prophecy fortells that a mighty stranger would descend on wings from heaven---overthrow the ruler of the valley--and make the Wamona great and rich.

Ruthlessly capitalizing on the old legend, the Red Dragon institues a reign of ruthless terror, forcing the Indian Braves to mine a local deposit of valuable radium ore.

"Only one man dares resist--the brave young warrior Komah, who has fled from his miserable tribe..." As he wanders through the woods, he sights another "wendigo," descending from the sky on a fabulous flying horse.

Although he resolves to kill this new intruder, Komah soon discovers that arrows and tomahawks are useless against the magic armor and sword of sharpness possessed by the

astounding Sir Justin, better known as--THE SHINING KNIGHT. With his magical weapons and flying horse, the Knight was the only member of the team who could approximate super-abilities, and was thus the most powerful.

Enlisting the aid of Komah and other Indians, the Knight uses all of his special abilities to end the white mans' reign of terror. Although the Red Dragon tries to escape in a plane, the Shining Knight mounts Victory, his personal pegasus, and strikes the plane with his lance, disabling it, and enabling him to capture the Red Dragon. Upon landing, the Knight advises the warriors to sell the riches dug from the earth to men of the outer world, so that the tribe may enjoy the profit.

"And so, the strange, old prophecy of the trip was fulfilled---a mighty visitor flew down from the sky, overthrew the master of the valley, and enriched the people who lived there. . ."

One by one, the Hand has seen his best agents go down in defeat--but the most sinister agent of all remains to oppose the Vigilante--the Nefarious DUMMY!

The Dummy, superbly illustrated by Mort Meskin, or "Mort Morton Jr.," as the credits would have it, seemed just that, a sinister Dummy who looked just like an evil Charlie McCarthy. In fact, thruout most of the story, his own mob was convinced that he was a wooden creature, and that one of the mob was a ventriloquist. They were wrong.

In this episode, the Dummy's racket was to secretly kidnap important people, leaving a statue in their place. Then, by pretending that he had turned them to stone, he issued orders for ransom. Purely by luck, the Vigilante encounters Dummy's agents at a movie set, and again by luck, discovers that the fake address on the S.A.E. conveniantly included with the Dummy's ransom note, becomes a real address when exposed to flame.

Armed with this knowledge, Vigilante crashes the manikin of murder's hideout. Realizing that all is lost, the Dummy presses a secret button, sliding a section of the wall up, revealing a room full of stone statues. Hiding in the room, he attempts to pick the Vigilante off, but a split second before the gun cracks out, the Range-fighter steps sidewards, sending the line of statues beside him crashing to the ground, and neatly pinning the Dummy.

Enraged beyond belief, the Hand vows revenge. When the Law Legionares report back to Gotham Theater, he moniters their meeting, then once again appears on the screen, this time revealing the location of his hideout. The Hand had decided to take matters into his own hand, so to speak.

Before the 7 arrive however, the Hand receives a phone call from his doctor, telling him of a new cure for his malady. Now, the arch-villain must fight not only for his vanity, but for his life as well.

One by one the soldiers overcome individual traps--clutching iron hands, pits of spikes, wolves, electric traps, and iron barriers, only to face death from a machine designed to produce lightning bolts, while the Hand himself is protected by plexi-glass 12 feet thick.

However, before the fatal switch can be thrown, the blazing six-guns of the Vigilante sever the lightning gun from its supporting cables, swiveling it arround at the Hand. "Thus Ends the career of a Master of Evil such as the world has seldom seen--and let us hope seldom will see."

At this point, a wiser reader might have observed that "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will--"

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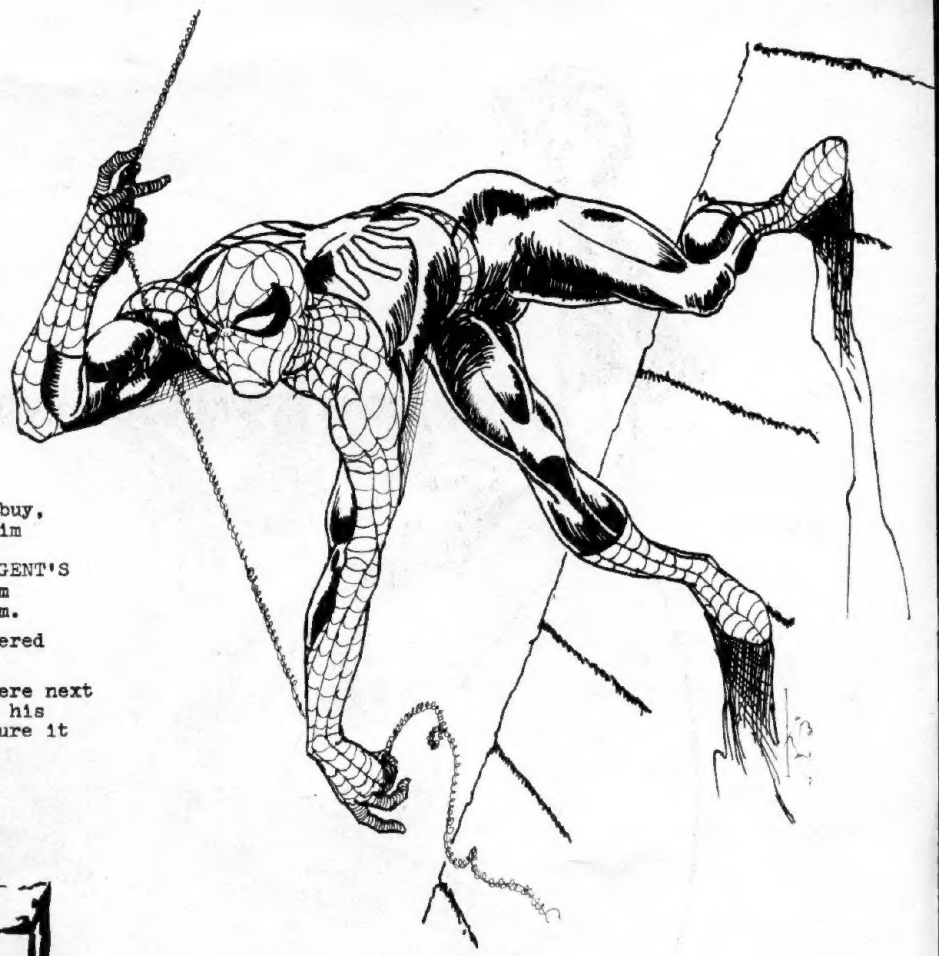
COMIC CHATTER



This issue of Comic Chatter starts off on a sad note. George Klein, a fine inker at Marvel, has passed away. A great loss to the comic media. He Will Be Missed!

Now for things a little on the brighter side.

Perhaps, by this time, many of you have heard that Jim Steranko had left Marvel. As of this writing, the problem Jim had with Marvel has been straightened out and he's back at work. Jim has also sold some paintings to various paperback companies, such as LANCER - Keep an eye out for them.

I know all you fans will be excited to learn, that sometime in Aug. or Sept., you'll be able to buy, for a mere $1.00 each, four 25" X 36" posters by Jim Steranko. These posters will be in color and will feature SPIDERMAN, CAPTAIN AMERICA, THE HULK and AGENT'S of S.H.I.E.L.D. They will be available either from Marvel or be sold in 5 & 10¢ stores. Watch for 'em.

You might also like to know, that Jim was offered the Batman newspaper strip, but turned it down.

ABOUT TALON - All you Jim Steranko fans, be here next issue. Jim is soon to release some big news about his sword and sorcery creation, Talon. And we'll feature it here. Don't miss it!

As you're reading Part 1 of Mr. A this issue, notice the name of the newspaper Graine works for - "The Daily Crusader". I wonder if Steve's trying to tell me something?

OMISSINS and CORRECTIONS: About last issues Gardner Fox article - I've found Mr. Fox also wrote some Moon Girl stories in the late '40's as well as Manhattan's Files, Igor the Archer, Juan Meatbal and The Chessmen for International Comics. The first novel he wrote was not his first published story. The Borgia Blade, was published by Gold Medal in 1953, while his first comic story was Steve Malone. Before Mr. Fox wrote his first novel, he also wrote short stories for Weird Tales, Planet Stories, Fantasy Adventure, Ace Sports, Varsity, Baseball Stories, Ten Story Western, and the Boston Globe - plus a lot of other pulp magazines. I'd like to thank Mr. Fox for giving me this information, to keep the record straight.

Look for a feature article on Dan Adkins in a future issue of The Comic Crusader - With some art by him.

Also coming up is a great article on The Heap, by Tom Fagan.

Next issue many of our regular features will be dropped for this issue only. Once again, The Comic Crusader will bring you its Comic Con Issue. We'll try to give you an accurate, in-depth report on the goings on at the New York con. If you read last year's report, I know you won't want to miss this one. For an overall report and behind the scenes coverage - Don't Miss Issue #7 of THE COMIC CRUSADER - On Sale, late In September.

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The Fanzine with the Fan in Mind